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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 005360

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [PINS](#) [IS](#) [GAZA](#) [DISENGAGEMENT](#)

SUBJECT: DISENGAGEMENT SITUATION REPORT, AUGUST 31, 2005

REF: TEL AVIV 5343

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Gene Cretz. Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

This is a joint message from Embassy Tel Aviv and Consulate General Jerusalem.

This message conveys information as of 1800 hours local time.

1. (C) Summary: The Knesset approved (58-23) the Israeli agreement with Egypt allowing Egypt to post 750 Border Guards on the Egypt-Gaza border, and the GOI plans to sign the agreement on September 1. Egyptian Intelligence Chief Omar Suleiman briefed General Ward on his August 31 meeting with Prime Minister Sharon. Suleiman said he told Prime Minister Sharon that the GOE's bottom line is that Rafah must remain a two-way crossing point for the movement of people between Gaza and Egypt and there should be no Israeli presence at the crossing post-disengagement. Suleiman said the Egyptian government is not opposed to a third-party presence at Rafah, if the GOI so requests. End Summary.

2. (SBU) DISENGAGEMENT STATUS

-- The IDF continues to concentrate on the removal of settlers' possessions, demolition of houses, and removal of IDF infrastructure.

-- According to one of the legal advisors working with Minister Dahlan, the PA continues to seek assurances from the GOI that hazardous materials, such as gas tanks, are being removed from the houses prior to demolition, as stipulated in Quartet Special Envoy Wolfensohn's letter to Minister Dahlan.

The letter also states that before the GOI undertakes the demolition process, the GOI will provide the PA with those parts of its environmental audit that determine the amount of hazardous materials in the houses. The PA has not yet received this report, according to the legal advisor.

3. (SBU) SECURITY SITUATION

GAZA:

-- Quiet Night: The IDF reported no security incidents in Gaza from 0600 hours August 30 to 0600 hours August 31.

-- Missile Fired: Palestinian militants fired an anti-tank missile mid-day in the direction of IDF tanks and bulldozers near Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza, according to Palestinian sources. UNRWA reports that the IDF vehicles were located on the green line. The IDF responded with gunfire towards Beit Hanoun. PA security forces are now searching the area. No injuries were reported.

-- Bulldozers Vandalized: On the morning of August 31, IDF forces discovered that 16 bulldozers being used to demolish buildings at Neveh Dekalim had been sabotaged during the night. The IDF suspects that volunteers assisting in the packing of settlers' possessions were responsible.

4. (SBU) PALESTINIAN REACTIONS

-- PA Civil Affairs Minister/Disengagement Coordinator Dahlan continues to recuperate in Amman from a slipped disc, according to ConGen sources. He has been ordered to stay off his feet for a week and rest. It is still unclear if he will be back in the West Bank/Gaza in time for QSE Wolfensohn's September 3-9 visit to the region.

-- A Hamas delegation met with Egyptian Intelligence Chief Suleiman in Gaza on August 30. After the meeting, a Hamas spokesman, Sami Zuhri, stated that "We don't need an Israeli redeployment. What we need and fight for is a comprehensive Israeli pullout from the Gaza Strip, including land, sea and air, and to ensure genuine Palestinian sovereignty on our lands."

5. (SBU) GOI POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

-- The Knesset met August 31 and approve the Egypt-Israel Border Guard agreement for Gaza by a vote of 58-23. Defense Minister Mofaz presented the agreement to the Knesset, arguing there is no military logic to keeping the IDF in the

Philadelphi corridor and that "the Egyptian deployment does not represent a threat." Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Yuval Steinitz (Likud) argued at for 45 minutes against the agreement, and urged MKs to vote against it on the grounds that it would "allow an enemy to come to the borders of Israel." The GOI plans to sign the agreement on September 1.

16. (C) BORDER CROSSINGS/HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

-- Rafah: Egyptian Intelligence Chief Omar Suleiman briefed General Ward on his August 31 meeting with Prime Minister Sharon. Suleiman said he told Sharon that the GOE's bottom line is that Rafah must remain a two-way crossing point for the movement of people between Gaza and Egypt and there should be no Israeli presence at the crossing post-disengagement.

-- Suleiman said the Egyptian government is not opposed to a third-party presence at Rafah, if the GOI so requests. Suleiman also said that Rafah could be closed for up to two months to set up the new procedures. Suleiman said that the GOE is prepared to give its assurances that it will not allow individuals of concern to the GOI to use the Rafah crossing.

-- On passage of goods, Suleiman said he told Sharon that Egypt was prepared to accept the two-way movement of goods through the Kerem Shalom crossing in order to facilitate GOI monitoring.

-- Suleiman told General Ward that Sharon listened to his proposal but made no commitment. When GOI Defense Minister Mofaz started to object to the proposal, Sharon quieted him, according to Suleiman.

-- Crossing Talks: GOI and PA officials, along with the World Bank and USAID, were scheduled to meet in Tel Aviv on August 31 for another trilateral discussion on the movement of agricultural produce, according to USAID officials.

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